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Secret Policy On Terrorism Given Airing

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The Reagan administration made its first public statement yesterday about a secret new presidential directive that, officials said, established a broad charter for "taking the offensive" against international terrorism.

"The states that practice terrorism or actively support it cannot be allowed to do so without consequence," said the White House statement, read by spokesman Larry Speakes.

The statement, which was laboriously drafted by National Security Council officials after news of the April 3 presidential directive leaked out last weekend, did not specify any preemptive or retaliatory actions that the administration would consider taking against state-supported terrorism.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, in a speech the day Reagan's directive was signed, said a "purely passive strategy" against terrorism is insufficient and asked for public consideration of such questions as when and how to take "preventive or preemptive action against known terrorist groups." An official said that the word "preemptive" is not in the document and that just what steps might be taken are still being debated.

Officials familiar with the presidential document said it lacks specifics. It is significant, they said, as a "decision in principle" to use force against terrorism and as the authorization for detailed policy-making and planning to follow.

One official said such questions as the safeguards on preemptive or retaliatory strikes and issues of coordination with friendly nations are on "the front burner" for consideration within the executive branch. Officials confirmed a report in the Los Angeles Times, which broke the story Sunday, that 26 government agencies and offices have been ordered to provide options to the White House on how to implement various aspects of the new policy.

Referring to a sensitive policy issue fought out during the deliberations, several officials said an executive order prohibiting U.S. agencies from carrying out assassinations abroad remains in effect, despite the new determination to strike forcibly at terrorists. In what seemed to be an allusion to this, the White House statement spoke of the right of all governments to resist terrorism by "all legal means available."

Speakes' statement at the midday White

House press briefing said "a detailed review" of international terrorism produced "some conclusions on what we must do to protect ourselves, and to assist others in protecting themselves, from this growing threat."

As a first step, the statement said, the United States will use "every channel of communication that is available to us" to dissuade other governments from sponsoring terrorism. No governments were mentioned, but Shultz referred in his April 3 speech to Iran, Syria, Libya and North Korea.

A decision was also made, the statement said, to "increase our efforts with other governments to obtain and exchange the information needed about states and groups involved in terrorist activities in order to prevent attacks, warn our people, our friends and allies, and reduce the risks."

A maximum effort also will be made, it said, to publicize and condemn state-supported terrorism.

"When these efforts fail, however, it must be understood that when we are victimized by acts of terrorism we have the right to defend ourselves—and the right to help others do the same," the statement added.

The statement portrayed Reagan's decision as "a re-focused emphasis" rather than a change of policy. Nonetheless, preemptive or retaliatory raids against terrorist-related targets by U.S. military or paramilitary forces abroad would be a departure from past U.S. practice.

One way to combat terrorism "is to focus our intelligence assets on a few known targets," an official said.

After a terrorist action occurs, he said, the new approach would mean more aggressive action after the fact.

Specifically, if there were another bombing like the one in Lebanon that killed 241 U.S. servicemen last October, the United States would be more aggressive in seeking retribution, he said.

This is a difficult problem, the official added, saying that a building in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley attacked by French forces in a retaliatory raid last year did not contain any terrorists but instead was empty.

The United States helped identify the target and almost participated in the raid, but the French went ahead alone after Washington hesitated for weeks as an internal debate raged.

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